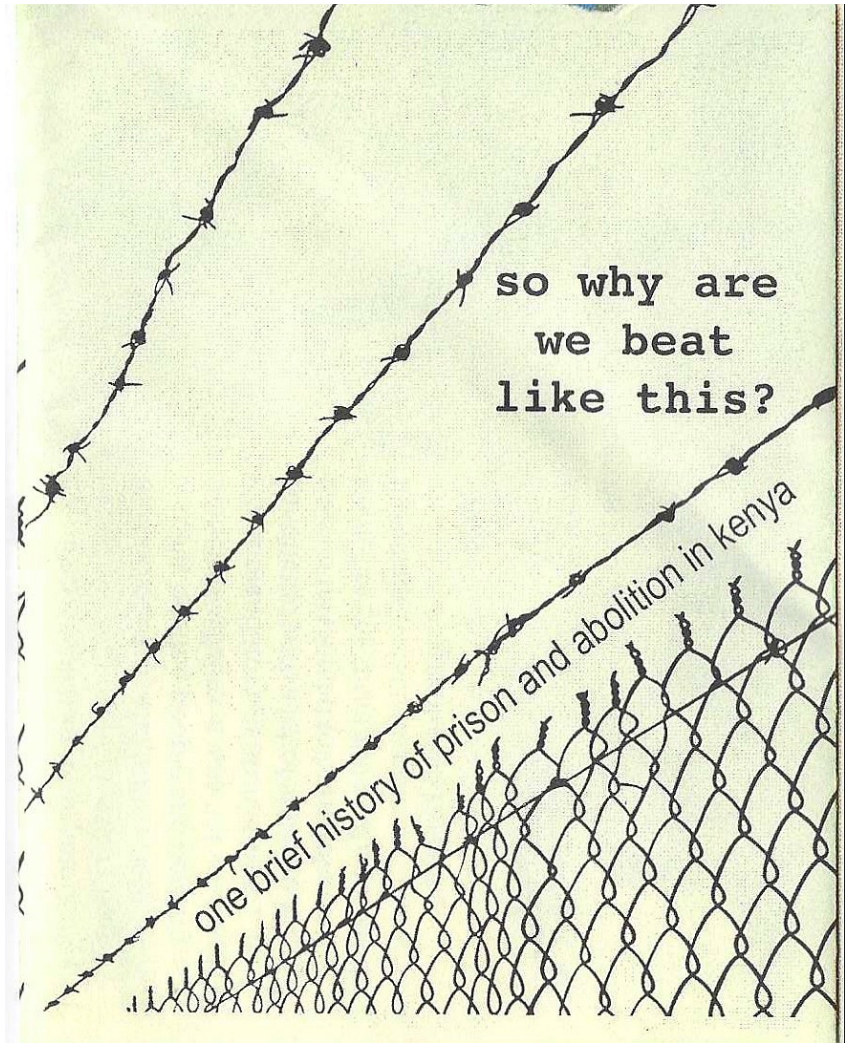
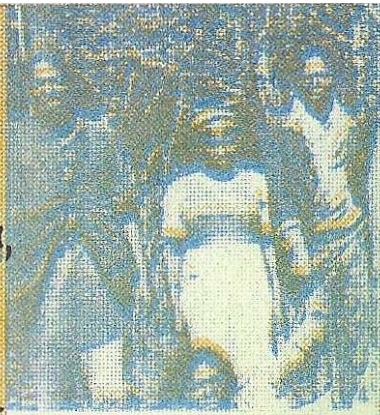
so why are we beat like this?

one brief history of prison and abolition in kenya



When the British built Kamiti Prison in 1954 to incarcerate the Mau Mau, they included an installation, Kamiti Detention Camp, for women members of the movement. After arrest + screening, the 'less deviant' women were sent to different work camps around the country while the 'hardcore' women went to Kamiti. There, they were further divided into five categories according to degrees of deviance:

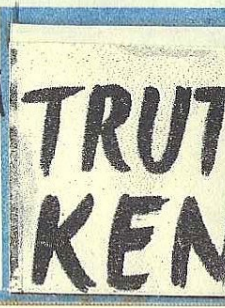


hiti (black), mburi (dark grey), njau (dark grey), mori (light grey), and ng'ombe (white).

Those who succumbed to torture and confessed to being Mau Mau went into a 'rehabilitation' programme that revolved around assumptions about their agency and domesticity – basic literacy, civic education, agricultural training, hygiene, embroidery, gardening, cooking, and welfare. By the end of 1954, 2000 women had been detained

the task of rehabilitating these women is an extremely hard one

Eileen Fletcher, the social worker + psychiatrist hired to implement the



programme, resigned less than a year later. She returned to Britain where she started a campaign against the detention of women and children in Kenya. The colonial government dismissed her and denied her reports, but she received some public support.

There is evidence that wives have in many cases persuaded their husbands to take the oath and are often very militant. They are also said to be bringing up their children to follow the Mau Mau creed. It is therefore more important to rehabilitate the women than the men if the next generation is to saved

Young girls in gaol

KAMITI. The woman officer in charge of the Women's Prison told me that a number of the female convicts were under 14 years-of-age and it was illegal for them to be in prison but there was nowhere else to put them. She also said that 17 of the girl Lifers would have been hanged for murder, but for their youth and their sex, as at that time under the Emergency Regulations, Africans could be hanged if they happened to be in a house at a time when someone committed a murder, or even for consorting with Mau Mau.

The sentences passed by the court on women, some of them mere children are worth noting (extracts from official records):

Age 11. Taking two illegal oaths.* Seven years Hard Labour.

Age 12. Consorting with Mau Mau. Indeterminate Sentence.

Age under 18. Only with gang two days. Sentenced to seven years Hard Labour "for willingly consorting with gang and with a woman sentenced for murder, but not with intent to murder."

Age 30. Taking illegal oath. Seven years Hard Labour.

Age 12. Consorting with armed persons. Indeterminate Sentence.

**The first two oaths are fairly inocuous: not to divulge any Mau Mau secrets and not to betray any member of the Mau Mau.*

Ag

to Mau Mau. Little Swahili, few capabilities. It is noted that in opinion of trial Judge she may have been press ganged. Not a dangerous character. Should be detained for a period not exceeding five years if that be the Governors Pleasure.

Age 15. Unlawful possession ammunition. Indeterminate Sentence.

Age 19. Consorting with suspected persons. Seven years Hard Labour.

Age 25. Taking illegal oath (two counts). Five years and seven years Hard Labour concurrent.

Age 16. (1) Member of unlawful society; (2) Attempting to commit offence punishable by death; (3) Assault causing Bodily Harm; (4) Assault causing Bodily Harm. Sentence 15 years Imprisonment.

Age 42. Has seven children aged from 15 months to 22 years. Charged with being in unlawful possession of ammunition. Sentenced to Death, commuted to Life Imprisonment.

Age 16. Consorting with persons in unlawful possession of firearms and ammunition. Indeterminate Sentence.

Age 16–17. Consorting with persons in unlawful possession of firearms (gang). Indeterminate Sentence.

Age 17. Unlawful possession ammunition. Indeterminate Sentence.

Age 16. Consorting with armed persons. Indeterminate Sentence.

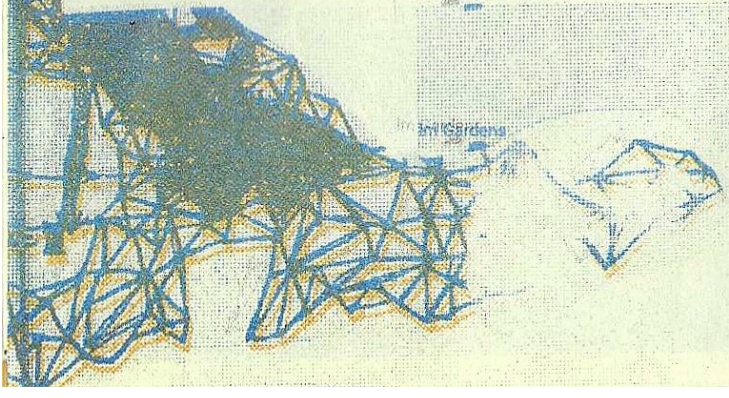
Age 16. Unlawful possession of firearms. Unlawful possession ammunition. Indeterminate Sentence.

Those indeterminate sentences only come up for review every four years. No rehabilitation work had been done with any of them as it was against the policy of the department to work with the "Black" category. I was allowed to work with them as an experiment and had a very marked response from

No more can be done with these Hard Core
be sent into exile at some fairly inacces
country as possible. After a period in ex
will return to a reasonable state of mind

I saw a letter from the Commandant of a prison for Mau Mau women saying "I have been informed that at Githunguri there are 52 single corrugated iron cells which would be of tremendous value to us in connection with screening women and for segregation purposes." A Commandant showed me single cells which he was constructing and said, "By the time the women have been in here for a year, even the blackest will give in."

a number of witches of varying quality



at the moment, so I recommend that they
sible place as far away from the Kikuyu
ile it is possible that some of them
and so can then be rrehabilitated.

This woman officer's screening figures for September, 1955 convicts who served their sentences are illuminating:—

Convicts

160 classified grey, recommended for Repatriation.

227 classified black, recommended for Detention.

Long-Term Convicts

13 classified grey, recommended for Repatriation.

45 classified black, recommended for Detention.

Girl gaoled for playing

Another woman official told me of a girl of 13, arrested for playing in the street after curfew and taken to this Mau Mau prison. Although the father had paid £4 10s. fine this was not enough and she was still in prison.

ONE SHILLING

TRUTH about KENYA

an eye witness account by

Eileen Fletcher

FORMER REHABILITATION OFFICER KENYA GOVERNMENT

"Suffer the little children . . . ."

Foreword by

LESLIE HALE

Member of Parliament for Oldham West

- Concentration Camps
- White Supremacy
- Children Starved
- Tortured to Death
- Government Statement

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Sources

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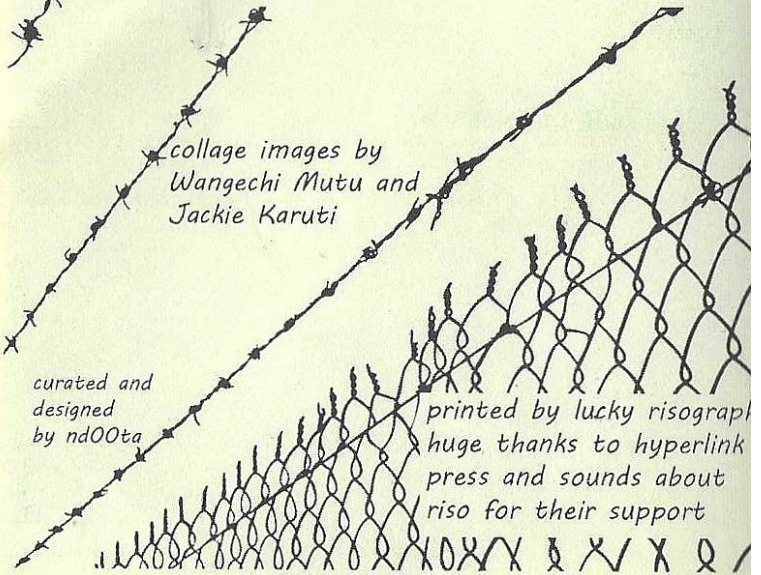

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